

Printing package great for beginners

If you own a Hewlett-Packard Series II laser printer and have never bothered using it for anything but standard business letters, you may wish to consider a new program called Laser-Ready that makes doing the fancy stuff easy.

Laser-Ready, which costs \$99.95, is actually a kit of software, fonts and laser printing supplies. The package comes with its own families of "soft fonts," such as Times, Helvetica and Elite type styles, that come on floppy disks; its own built-in editor; and a menu system that "holds your hand" as you prepare a number of standard documents.

The supplies include a sampler of laser papers, mailing labels and an overhead transparency.

Designed for novices, this program's simple approach will get you using a laser printing in no time. It has some significant limitations, however.

When you start out, Laser-Ready asks you to fill in some personal information: name, business name and address, and even business motto, if you have one. This



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information is reused in many of the Laser-Ready forms.

Here are some of the things the program does:

- **Business forms.** Three forms are available by menu selection: invoices,

purchase orders and statements. While the program fills in your company information, you have to type in everything else. A keystroke prints the form complete with lined boxes and in the font of your choice.

- **Reports and spreadsheets.** This module of Laser-Ready takes text files you've already created with a word processor or spreadsheet program and enhances them with the font of your choice. You can also print these documents across the long dimension of standard paper, which is known as "landscape printing."

- **Mailing labels.** Printing mailing labels on a laser printer is fast, quiet and attractive. But it's so difficult to do that most people don't bother. Laser-Ready lets you print labels from an existing text file or by filling in data on the screen.

- **Business cards and resumes.** You can use the program to print business cards, 10 to a page in one of two styles. After printing, you'll have to trim each of the cards carefully along the dividing lines.

The resume feature may be more practical, however. You are prompted to type personal information under various headings. Then you just press a key and a beautiful resume is generated.

- **Newsletters, fliers, notices, overhead transparencies.** You can whip out a quickie two-column newsletter complete with headlines and rules. You can also crank out eye-catching fliers and notices using up to 30-point type.

Lastly, by substituting transparency film for paper in your laser printer you can print easy-to-read, large-type overhead materials.

The "manual" for Laser-Ready

is actually a large double-sided poster that shows examples of the various forms. After picking out a form and layout that you want to print, you just follow the step-by-step procedures on the screen.

On the downside, Laser-Ready will only work on the new H-P LaserJet Series II printers.

The Bottom Line: For the price, Laser-Ready is a good buy for the beginning user. Its fill-in-the-blank templates and multiple document styles will allow you to print documents that would be the envy of veteran laser owners.

With limited file integration and data saving, however, the program isn't appropriate for businesses with moderate to heavy forms needs.

Laser-Ready is available from Mind Path Technologies, 12700 Park Central Drive, Suite 1801, Dallas 75251.

Hillel Segal's weekly column evaluates gadgets, small-computer hardware and software, seminars, and books designed to enhance business productivity.